



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## VENTAILLE

Skeat's explanation of *aventaille*<sup>1</sup> in the lines in Chaucer's *Envoy to the Clerke's Tale* (C. T., Group E., 1202-4):

For though thyn housbonde armed be in maille,  
The arwes of thyn crabbed eloquence  
Shal perce his brest, and eke his aventaille,

hardly hits the mark. After citing Douce's perfectly correct account of the *ventail*, or "beaver," of the helmet of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, "the lower part of the helmet which admitted air," he goes on to say: "Jephson states that *and eek his aventaille* is a perfect example of bathos. I fail to see why; the weapon that pierced a ventail would pass into the head and inflict a death wound."<sup>2</sup> That Jephson's view of the matter is the correct one will be evident from what follows.

More than forty years ago Quichérat cited the Chaucerian passage most aptly in his *Explication du mot ventaille dans les chansons de geste*,<sup>3</sup> an article written in part to correct the traditional error of French dictionaries on the same point. His conclusions have been accepted by the most prominent French scholars,<sup>4</sup> but seem to be generally unknown to Middle-English scholars;<sup>5</sup> so it may be well to make a restatement of his results,

<sup>1</sup> In his edition of *William of Palerne*, p. 254, Skeat's definition, "The movable front to a helmet, and through which the wearer breathed," and the quotation from Cotgrave—a definition of the "beaver"—cannot explain the passage referred to (3608, 3609):

william than witzli by the auentayle him hent  
to have with his sward swapped of his hed.

The English translator at this point has made a very free rendering of his French original (*Guillaume de Palerne*, ed. Michelant, 6208, cf. 6231), but neither here, in the original and in the translation, nor elsewhere in the French text (5767, 5970-74, 6614, 6830, 6837, 6866, 6882; cf. Kaluza, *Eng. Stud.*, IV, pp. 252, 253, 269) is the *ventaille* a part of the helmet.

<sup>2</sup> *Works of Chaucer*, V., 352.

<sup>3</sup> *Mém. de la Soc. des Antiq. de France*, 3, VII (1864), 231 ff.; reprinted in his *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire*, II (1886), 314 ff.

<sup>4</sup> E. g., Littré, *Dict.*, s. v. *aventail*; P. Meyer, *La chanson de la croisade contre les Albigeois*, I (1875), 447; L. Favre (Sainte Palaye, *Dict. hist. de l'ancien langage françois*, X, 141). For Godefroi the *ventaille* is a part of the helmet, although a number of his citations belie his definition, *Dict. de l'anc. lang. franc.*, VIII, 174; cf. I, 510.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. R. Morris, *Sir Gawayne*, p. 86; Bradley-Stratmann, *Middle-Eng. Dict.*, s. v. *aventaille*; Köbling, *Sir Bevis of Hantoun*, pp. 369, 398; *N. E. D.*, s. v. *aventail*, where the definition of a beaver is given. Kaluza, *Libeaus Desconus*, p. 20, corrects this error by a reference 541]

supplemented with other evidence.<sup>1</sup> In French armor of the tenth to the fourteenth centuries an essential part of the hauberk, or coat of mail, was the hood-shaped headdress of chain-mail, the *coiffe*, which, covering the back of the neck and the head, left only the lower part of the face unprotected.<sup>2</sup> The helmet was placed on top, and fastened to the *coiffe*.<sup>3</sup> The opening in the *coiffe* through which the wearer breathed was known as the *ventaille*. No instance of its use in its primitive etymological sense can be cited, as at an early date the word was applied to a part of the armor itself. At first it denoted a wide strip of chain-mail which was attached to, or formed part of, the *coiffe*. Hanging down from the right cheek, it was brought round the chin, and, protecting the neck and upper breast, covered the mouth and left cheek, and was fastened on the top of the head with laces.<sup>4</sup> It thus performed the double service of protecting the parts of the body it covered, and of securing the *coiffe* in place. At a later period the *coiffe* did not form one piece with the hauberk, and hung low down in front, either inside it or outside.<sup>5</sup> The word *ventaille* had an extension in its meaning parallel to the evolution of the piece of armor,<sup>6</sup> when it did not supplant *coiffe* as the name of the whole piece of armor.<sup>7</sup>

to Schultz (see below). I have already cited some of the authorities in a note on the use of the word in *T. and C.*, V, 1558 in my *Chaucer's Indebtedness to Guido delle Colonne* (1903), p. 90 n. For parallels to the *Troilus* passage, cf. note 1 *supra*; *Guillaume de Pal.*, 6231, 6234; *Aliscans*, ed. Wienbeck, etc., 5968.

<sup>1</sup> Quichérat, *Hist. du costume en France*, 133, 288; Viollet-le-Duc, *Dict. du mobilier français*, VI, 353-57, Plates, 105-7; V. Schirling, *Die Verteidigungswaffen im altfranzösischen Epos*, 43 ff.; A. Schultz, *Das höfische Leben*, 2d ed., II (1889) 50 ff.; O. Hartung, *Herriks Archiv*, LXXXIX, 281, 372; E. du Ménil, *Études sur quelques points d'archéologie* (1862), 270, 509; W. Foerster, *Atol*, p. 607.

<sup>2</sup> Quichérat, *Mél.*, 316-19; *Hist. du cost.*, 133; Schultz, 50, 51; Schirling, 40-42.

<sup>3</sup> Quichérat, *Mél.*, 316, 319; Schultz, 53, 55, 78; Schirling, 41, 69.

<sup>4</sup> Quichérat, *Mél.*, 322, 323; Schultz, 51-55.

<sup>5</sup> Quichérat *Mél.*, 319, 320; *Hist.*, 288. The *coiffe* was also called *clavain* when it did not form part of the hauberk. Cf. Godefroi, II, 148; Schultz, II, 55; Schirling, 42; *Rom.*, XI, 565. As to the identity of the *clavain* and *clavel* cf. authorities cited by Levy, *Provenzalisches Supplement-Wörterbuch*, I, 260, 261.

<sup>6</sup> *Huon de Bordeaux*, 8051; *Fierabras*, 4686, 5677; *Maugis d'Aigremont*, 6434, 6435; Schultz, 54, n. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Quichérat *Mél.*, 321, *Hist.*, 288; W. Foerster, *Kristian von Troyes, Karrenritter*, p. 384; *Garin le Loherain*, I, 164, 4; *Elie de Saint Gilles*, ed. Foerster, 2101. For a similar semantic evolution of the Germanic *halsbêrc* cf. Lehmann, *Brünne und Helm im ags. Beowulflied*, 20-22; Kinzel, *Zeit. f. deutsch. Phil.*, XIII, 123; Lichenstein, *Anz. f. d. Alterth.*, VIII, 93.

The Latin etymon *ventacula* of the French word and its Provençal equivalent *ventalha* at once suggest that the piece of armor was an innovation made on Gallic soil, and there is reason to believe that, like the hauberk and helmet,<sup>1</sup> it was an article of Provençal manufacture, which was imported to northern France. For in Provençal *ventalha* is not only the name of a part of the armor;<sup>2</sup> at an early date it was applied to a part of the everyday costume. In the lines of the *Ensenhamen* of Arnaut Guilhem de Marsan:<sup>3</sup>

E faitz la cabessalha  
 atraves ab ventalha  
 ampla pels muscles sus,  
 car lo pieytz n'er pus clus;  
 e dirai vos per que,  
 e aprendetz o be;  
 per so c'om res no veyá  
 el pieys que mal esteya,

the ventalha is the part of a cape, or collar of a cloak,<sup>4</sup> which fastens it up in front. The *ventaille* has no such meaning in Old French; and if its meaning, as a part of the dress,<sup>5</sup> was restricted to a military habiliment, was this not due to the fact that northern France received the name with the piece of armor? That it was not of Germanic origin is evident from the fact that Middle High German translators of French texts<sup>6</sup> had no word with which to render *ventaille*, and made it synonymous with the *coiffe*, *hersenier*.<sup>7</sup> Only in translations of a later period does the

<sup>1</sup> G. Paris, *Rom.*, XVII, 425-29.

<sup>2</sup> E. g., *Ch. des Alb.*, 2525, Bertrand de Born, ed. Stimming (1892), XVII, 35; XXXVIII, 55. But that the second of these poems is falsely attributed to Bertrand, cf. Schultz Gora, *Deutsches Litteraturzeit.*, 1892, 1177.

<sup>3</sup> K. Bartsch, *Provenz. Lesebuch*, 136, 27-34. The date of the poem is ca. 1200. Bartsch, *Grundriss*, p. 51; Stimming, *Groebers Grundr.*, II, 2, 51.

<sup>4</sup> On the meaning of *cabessalha* see Levy, *Prov. Suppl.-Wörth.*, I, 180. Add to his reference Godefroy, s. v. *cheveceure*, and the citation "ele (i. e., une cotele) n'avoit mie la cheveceure de traveis sus les espaules," a perfect comment on the Provençal passage. On etymology cf. Horning, *Zeit. f. rom. Phil.*, XVIII, 234.

<sup>5</sup> On the meaning of *éventail* cf. Godefroy, VIII, 174; P. Meyer, *Flam.*, 2d ed., 410.

<sup>6</sup> In Lamprecht's translation of Albéric de Besançon's poems on Alexander the episodes of the arming of the hero, and his fight with Nicholas, are very much abridged (cf. P. Meyer, *Alex. le Grand*, II, 124, 126-31; Wilmanns, *Götting. gel. Anz.*, 1885, 298-301; Kinzel, *Anz. f. d. A.*, XIII, 228, 230); so there is no chance of seeing the translation of *ventalha*, when it occurs in the Provençal text (cf. Meyer, *loc. cit.*, I, MS de l'Arsenal, 365, 370, 647, 703).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Rom. de Troie*, ed. Joly, 2565, 16169, with Herbort von Fritzlar, *Liet von Troie*, 460 ff., 10330 ff.; Lichenstein, *Anz. f. d. A.*, 3, VIII, 91.

loan-word *vinteile* appear.<sup>1</sup> It seems as if only after the *ventaille* had become a part of the helmet was the French word drafted into Italian as *ventaglia*,<sup>2</sup> there is no example of it in early Italian, where we find *barbuda* with the wider meaning of *coiffe*.<sup>3</sup> In Spanish *ventaille* has been translated by *ventana*,<sup>4</sup> a word of native growth with the same meaning as the etymological meaning of the French word. *Ventaille* and *aventaille*—the latter form due to agglutination with the feminine definite article—passed into Middle English without any change in either form or meaning.

It was with this early type of armor, in which the *ventaille* was a part of the *coiffe*, and not of the helmet, that Chaucer was acquainted, and protecting the breast as the *aventaille* did, the English poet's lines are "a perfect example of bathos." A few instances of a correct description of the results of a blow from a weapon will show the truth of this statement. The two earliest examples are in the *Chanson de Roland*:

Si vait ferir Escremiz de Valterne,  
L'escut del col li fraint et escantelet;  
De sun osbere li rumpit la ventaille:  
Sil fiert el piz entre les dous furceles,  
  
Vait le ferir par sun grant vasselage,  
L'escut li fraint, cuntre le coer li quasset,  
De sun osbere li disrumpit la ventaille,  
Son grant espiet parmi le cors passet,<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Grimm, *D. Gr.*, III, 445, has erred in defining the word as a part of the helmet, and in following him Benecke, *Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch*, III, 325, only gives the definition *helmvier* which does not apply to a single one of the passages cited; and the error is not corrected by Lexer, *Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterb.* III, 360, or Schade, *Altdeutsches Wörterb.*, I, 197.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. d'Ovidio, *Arch. glott.*, XIII, 425. It is not cited by Thomas in his list of French loan-words, in Italian, *Essais de philol. franç.*, 404, 405.

<sup>3</sup> *El Cantare di Fierabracci e Uhuieri*, ed. Stengel, 1004; *Orlando*, ed. Hübscher, I, 10; *VX*, 40; *XXXVII*, 35, *XXLIX*, 34, 38-40. Cf. Du Cange, s. v. *barbuda*; Levy, I, 126, 127. In the passage cited by Raynouard *barbuda* is not the piece of armor, but the part of the body covered by it. Cf. Ascoli, *AG.*, VII, 520; Zauner, *R. F.*, XIV, 408; F. Zambaldi, *Vocab. etimol. ital.*, 108d.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *La Gran Conquista de Ultramar*, II, cxxvii, p. 261b; *Chanson d'Antioch*, VIII, 508; G. Paris, *Rom.* XVII, 519, XIX, 589.

<sup>5</sup> *Ch. de Rol.* 1291-94, 3447-49a; MS O. Stengel in his critical edition has unfortunately rejected the good reading in O for 1293, in favor of that given in MSS due to scribes, who did not understand the meaning of *ventaille*, as is evident from the omission of 3449. The same sort of omissions and changes was made by the scribe of the prototype of the first part of the Berne MS of the *Aliscans*, who knew only the *ventaille* of the helmet. Cf. *Aliscans*, ed. Wienbeck, 1662, 1689, 4004, 4007, 4070, 4564, p. xxxi.

written at a period when the *coiffe* still formed a part of the hauberk. In the other instances cited below, from later texts, the *ventaille* is quite evidently not considered a part of the hauberk, as was, in all probability, the case in Chaucer's lines:

*Chanson de la Croisade contre les Albigeois*:<sup>1</sup>

Aucizon .i. donzel, c'anc ausberg ni ventalha  
Nol pog gandar de mort, que dins la coralha  
Ne li messol cairel co per .i. sac de palha;

*Orson de Beauvais*:<sup>2</sup>

La vantalle li frosse et perce la cuirie,  
Le cuer li a fendi, le premon et le fie;

*Roman d'Alexandre*:<sup>3</sup>

Tel cop li a done el pis sor la ventalle,  
Le fier de son espiel li met en la coralle;

*Laud Troy-Book*:<sup>4</sup>

Smot in-to helme and mayle  
Coleret and the ventayle:  
He carff him down Into his vent;

*Sir Ferumbas*:<sup>5</sup>

Ro<land> smot hym on the helm an heȝ, & laid hit a doun with mayn,  
Helm and coyfe therwyp a clef, þorw-out heued & brayn.  
His auentaille ne vailede him noȝt, that þe swerd ne clef him panne,  
Til it hadde in-to his bodi i-soȝt, by-nythe is brest a spanne.

Is it not clear that in the English poet's lines, as in the examples cited above, the piercing of the breast and *ventaille* is to be regarded as one and the same act? If Chaucer's description is incorrect, it is a part of the poet's fun to use here in his own way a formula common in metrical romances, as he had used numerous such formulas in *Sir Thopas*. We find the same rhetorical fault, perhaps unintentional this time, in the *Sowdone of Babylone*,<sup>6</sup>

He smote with mayne and myghte  
The nekke asonder, the ventayle also,

<sup>1</sup> Ed. P. Meyer, 2535-37.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. G. Paris, 1668, 1669.

<sup>3</sup> Ed. Michelant, 305, 32, 33.

<sup>4</sup> Ed. Wülfing, 7493-7495.

<sup>5</sup> Ed. Hertridge, 1602-1605. There is no equivalent for this passage in the French *Fierabras*, 2413-16.

<sup>6</sup> Ed. Hausknecht, ll. 528, 529.

since it was necessary to remove the *ventaille* in order to cut off the head.<sup>1</sup> As the *ventaille* did protect the lower part of the face, a severe blow on the former implied wounding the latter, but in every case the injury done the armor and the face is the result of a single blow:

*Aliscans*:<sup>2</sup>

Li quens le fiert devant en mi la chiere  
Du brant d'acier, qui fu fait en Baviere,  
De la ventaille li rompi la joiere,  
Tote la face li fendi par derriere;

*Roman de Troie*:<sup>3</sup>

L'escu li perce e la ventaille,  
Iluec li fist sis haubers faille:  
Par mi la chiere l'a navré;

*Fierabras*:<sup>4</sup>

Hardré a si feru du puig deles l'oie  
Que .ii. dens en la geule li pechoie et esmie:  
Se ne fust la ventaille que il avoit lacie,  
Du felon traiteur en fust Franche widie.

GEORGE L. HAMILTON.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN.

<sup>1</sup> *Destruction de Rome* (*Rom.* II, 28); *Rouland and Vernagu*, ed. Herrtage, 863, 864; *Octavian*, ed. Sarrazin, 1153, 1154; Schultz, 54, 55.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Wienbeck, p. 346, 22-25.

<sup>3</sup> Ed. Constans, 2579-81.

<sup>4</sup> Ed. Kroeber and Servois, 5845-48; cf. English translation, *Sir Ferumbas*, 5649-52.